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# Land Rights, Cultural Hybridization, and Self-determination of First Peoples A Case Study Among the Ngöbe of Western Panama

Clancy Jandreau  
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**Land Rights, Cultural Hybridization, and Self-determination of First  
Peoples**  
**A case study among the Ngöbe of Western Panama**

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May, 2011



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## **Abstract**

Hydroelectric and mining projects driven by Panama's prosperous growth, have come into collision with the country's largest indigenous population, the Ngöbe. Recently, the Ngöbe took to the streets in a large-scale indigenous rights mobilization that brought their struggle the international scene. Threats to the Ngöbe land and livelihood are nothing new to this group, but the scale and nature of these projects are testing the Ngöbe in an unprecedented fashion. They have had to organize and mobilize to defend their self-determination, using methods well outside their traditional way of life. This article examines the impact of this type of cultural hybridization on the ability of the Ngöbe people to achieve self-determination and their long-term cultural survival. Using interview and participant observation data from both Ngöbe university students and Ngöbe community members, this article argues that cultural hybridization can be an effective tool to promote self-determination if used extremely cautiously. There are serious consequences of cultural hybridization on cultural survival that can undermine the increased capacity for invoking the interests and rights of the Ngöbe people. The contention of this article relates to a case study analysis of the Ngöbe people, yet is intended to apply to the larger discussion of indigenous struggles for self-determination across the globe.

## **Acknowledgments**

Me gustaría agradecerle mi consejero, Dr. Osvaldo Jordan, por toda su ayuda y apoyo con este estudio. Yo nunca habría podido hacer este estudio sin la dirección que me ha dado. También yo le agradezco todo la ayuda y hospitalidad de Ricardo Miranda y su familia durante mi tiempo en campo. Muchas gracias a las comunidades y todas las personas que entrevisté para el apoyo y la oportunidad a visitar y pasear por su tierra. Le agradezco los estudiantes que me

dieron tiempo durante sus días ocupados. Y finalmente, muchas gracias a Arcadio Aguilar por conectarme con personas para entrevistar.

## **Resumen Ejecutivo**

El crecimiento en la población y la economía de la República de Panamá ha causado un crecimiento igual en el interés de recursos naturales también. Múltiples de concesiones de proyectos hidroeléctricos y mineros para los ríos y tierras ricas de Panamá ha sido el resultado de este interés. Para el pueblo Ngöbe, estos proyectos representan una amenaza para sus derechos de la tierra y sus derechos humanos como habitantes nativos de la República. Manifestaciones en los años de 2009 y 2010, resultaron en la prohibición del desarrollo de proyectos hidroeléctricos y mineros dentro la Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé y áreas anexas. Sin embargo, al final del año 2010, el artículo que garantizó esta prohibición fue quitó de la ley sin la consulta del pueblo Ngöbe. Por eso, el pueblo sentía traicionado por el gobierno y decidió de movilizarse en manifestación. El 31 de enero de 2012, la carretera Interamericana se cerró por las manifestaciones del pueblo Ngöbe. Durante los próximos ocho días, confrontaciones entre la policía nacional de Panamá y los manifestantes resultaron en dos muertos indígenas, más de cuarenta heridos, y por lo menos cien detenciones.

Eso conflicto creaba un proceso de diálogo entre representantes del gobierno y la Comarca Nobe-Buglé que todavía continua, tres meses después. Proyectos como la mina de Cerro Colorado y el hidroeléctrico de Barro Blanco, han desafiado el pueblo en maneras que nunca ha visto antes. El pueblo ha tenido que cambiar la manera en que resiste las amenazas de sus tierras y su gente. Cambios incluyen nuevas maneras de autorización, organización, movilización, acciones políticas, apoyo de organizaciones no gubernamentales, y educación

occidental. Mientras estos cambios pueden representar una mejor manera de hacer valer los intereses y derechos del pueblo, estos cambios son afuera de la cultura tradicional del pueblo Ngöbe y pueden representar una amenaza de la sobrevivencia cultural también.

El objetivo de este estudio fue examinar la influencia de estos intercambios culturales en la capacidad del pueblo Ngöbe a lograr su autodeterminación. El estudio usaba los métodos de entrevistas y observación de estudiantes universitarios y miembros de comunidades del pueblo Ngöbe. Todos los estudiantes entrevistados decían que tienen planes de regresar a sus comunidades cuando terminen sus estudios. Quieren que sus estudios tengan benéficos no solo para sus mismos sino también para el desarrollo y apoyo de sus comunidades. La mayoría de estudiantes crean que la educación es un tema importante para el fomento del pueblo Ngöbe. Todos se involucraron en las recientes movilizaciones pero crean que la lucha no ha terminado y están comprometidos de la continuación de la lucha.

Los miembros de las comunidades también sentían que la lucha no terminó. Sin embargo, había diferencias entre las visiones del futuro del pueblo y las de los estudiantes. Mientras los estudiantes se imaginen un futuro fortificado por la educación, miembros del pueblo se imaginen un futuro de costumbres tradicionales. Las personas entrevistadas están comprometidas de la continuación de la lucha pero la organización del pueblo todavía falta. La división entre las diferentes autoridades es un obstáculo a un esfuerzo unido en la lucha. Al pueblo, le preocupan autoridades que actúan por intereses personales sobre el interés colectivo del pueblo. El pueblo también falta la información fiel de la situación que lo enfrenta. Sin la constante información actual, existe la oportunidad de explotación del pueblo sin su conocimiento.

Estos resultados indican que ciertas integraciones en la cultura latina pueden ayudar la lucha en la organización, la capacitación, y la información del pueblo. Esta ayuda puede ser

importante para alcanzar los intereses y derechos del pueblo Ngöbe y para su llamada para la autodeterminación. Por el otro lado, el intercambio cultural puede tener impactos serios en la cultura tradicional del pueblo. Interacción con otras culturas abre la puerta por valores capitalistas y la negociación basada en intereses personales. Estos valores contrarrestan los valores tradicionales de uso, manejo, y protección colectiva de los recursos de la Comarca y comprometen el fomento unido del pueblo Ngöbe. Por lo tanto, aunque hay posibilidades de mejorar la lucha indígena con un intercambio cultural de organización, información, y educación, este mismo intercambio puede debilitar la unidad de una cultura luchando por autodeterminación.





## Introduction

Around the world there are thousands of groups (numbering in the 300 million) that consider themselves first nation peoples or indigenous (Toledo 2). These first nation peoples are among the most marginalized of groups in the countries which they live. In very few countries, mainly Papua New Guinea and Bolivia, are indigenous peoples considered to account for the majority of the national population (3). In every other country there are dominant non-indigenous cultures that have colonized former indigenous territory. In Latin America, colonization began in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Since this time, indigenous peoples have been fighting for their fundamental rights to land security, autonomy, and self-determination. The relationship between dominating non-indigenous states and dominated indigenous peoples has evolved in distinct patterns through time. For the indigenous people, this has manifested in a fundamental transformation in the nature in which nation states threaten their efforts for self-determination. This transformation has gone from outright violent oppression to neoliberal legal undermining of indigenous autonomies; from gun and bullet to pen and paper.

Over 500 years of constant struggle against colonial powers has resulted in the extinction of countless cultures and continued diminishment of remaining cultures. First nation peoples have had to quickly learn to adapt to the rapidly transforming tactics of the dominant nation states. Novel threats to cultural survival prompted new forms of resistance, including social capital adaptations, negotiation capacities, and indigenous rights movements. Some indigenous groups have been more successful than others at maintaining viable cultures using these new resistance strategies. Some of these strategies have led indigenous people to leave their traditional livelihoods to seek Western education and other forms of capacities. This can be considered a form of cultural hybridization in which two cultures mix without the outright diminishment of

the parent culture. This is different from acculturation, the absorption and integration of one culture into another more dominate culture (Jordan-Ramos 70), but still raises questions about impacts on the overall cultural survival of these groups.

In the literature, there are many examples of the interaction between cultural hybridization and self-determination of indigenous people. These examples reveal a complex interaction with case-specific benefits and costs. Cultural hybridization often takes the form of mediation, a transitional medium for one culture to communicate with another. For some indigenous groups, this has been an effective way to interact with dominate nation states. William McLoughlin's book, *Cherokee Renaissance in the New Republic*, tells the story of the Cherokee's use of literacy to obstruct the encroachment of their territory and further the interests of the Cherokee people (McLoughlin). The Kuna of Panama turned to literacy in much the same way (Howe 5). Within the Kuna governance structure, there are people called *Sikkiwis* or *secretarios* who are literate in the Spanish language and act as mediators for other authority figures to communicate with the Latino population of Panama (34). According to Howe, literacy was most important as a key for the Kuna in defining their self-representation and identity which consequently promoted their self-determination (63).

In contrast, accounts of cultural hybridization detriment abound in the literature as well. In the United States, the Tribal Councils created by the 1934 Wheeler-Howard Act in the United States, created transitional governance structures for Native American peoples to communicate with the U.S. Government; however, many cases resulted in further exploitation of indigenous lands due to the self interest of indigenous leaders elevated to positions of power (Mander). In Panama, something similar happened when western-educated Ngöbe leaders developed one of the first drafts for the Comarca lands law in the 1980s. These leaders had been recruited into the

Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), and crafted a document which seemed to favor the interests of the PRD over the indigenous community (Jordan-Ramos 185).

The objective of this research is to explore this intricate balance between cultural hybridization, the ability of indigenous peoples to achieve self-determination, and cultural survival. This investigation focuses on one indigenous group, the Ngöbe located in areas of western Panama. The recent conflict between the nation state of Panama and the Ngöbe people, which began early in the year 2012, was used as a case study to examine this question.

## **Literature Review**

### *Historical Background*

Among indigenous groups of Panama, the Ngöbe constitute the largest with a population of 260,058 individuals according to the 2010 census (Censos 2010). They are a culturally distinct group said to be the only remaining indigenous group originally from Panama (Young and Bort 2001, 121). The linguistically related but distinct group called the Buglé share territory and history with the Ngöbe. Together, they were formally called the Guymies. Their traditional territory was located in central Panama, including parts of the modern day provinces of Bocas del Torro, Chiriquí, Veraguas, Herrera, and Los Santos. However, encounters with the Spanish conquistadors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries pushed the Ngöbe and Buglé peoples out of the fertile alluvial plains of the Pacific coast, greatly reducing their former domain (121). In the refuge of the mountainous interior however, the Ngöbe were able to successfully survive the continued Spanish conquest while other indigenous populations were eradicated (Young and Bort 1985, 1-2). With few exceptions, up until the twentieth century, the Ngöbe were able to continue their traditional culture and livelihoods without the influence of Spanish domination

(Young and Bort 2001, 121). The Spanish focused their colonization on the low, flat, fertile lands of the coast and left the Ngöbe roughly untouched in the “marginal” uplands (122). Over this period, the Ngöbe developed an acephalous governance structure based on family networks called *caseríos* (Young 1971). This decentralized governance structure further promoted resistance to outside influence because it prevented large portions of the population to be affected at one time (2).

With the emergence of the second half of the twentieth century, things began to change for the Ngöbe people. Pressure from both internal and external factors greatly changed the trajectory of their livelihoods. Both push and pull factors weighed on the traditional subsistence livelihoods of the Ngöbe people (Jordan-Ramos 158). Decreasing natural resource bases driven by increased population sizes pushed the Ngöbe people to find alternative sources of subsistence (Young and Bort 1985, 2). From the year 1930 to 1980, the population size increased from just 16,000 to 54,000 individuals (Censos 1980). This sharp rise in population stressed the swidden agriculture system of the Ngöbe. This type of system needs large sections of land and long fallow times to be sustainable. Due to the sharp population climb, fallow periods decreased significantly (Young 2007, 74-81) and agricultural production declined throughout the twentieth century (Young and Bort 2001, 127). At the same time, national development surrounding the Ngöbe people generated jobs which appeared to be the best alternative income source given such productive reductions (Jordan-Ramos 156). The pull of opportunities in the market economy brought many Ngöbe into wage-based labor industries such as banana plantations and agricultural production (Young and Bort 1985, 2-3).

Relations between the Ngöbe and the Panamanian State in the political realm went through a transition at this time as well. With the advent of the twentieth century, Latin

American nations adopted a new ideology towards indigenous people referred to as indigenismo (Jordan-Ramos 60). Indigenismo ideology emphasizes integrating the heritages of indigenous peoples with the latino culture into one mestizo culture which finds pride in the shared heritage and history within a country. The days of indigenismo ideology in Panama, like the rest of Latin America, were limited. Social and political activism by indigenous peoples in the middle part of the twentieth century lead to an end to the indigenismo ideology (72). Indigenous people finally came to the point when they took a stand to define a self-described identity for themselves (74). This new call for self-determination from indigenous people brought on the age of multiculturalism in the republics of Latin America (Horton 832). In Panama, multiculturalism policies within the government are believed to have started with the Omar Torrijos regime of 1968 (837). In the constitution of 1972, indigenous leaders were recognized for the first time, a pathway to elect indigenous representatives to the legislature was created, and communal land rights were recognized (Wickstrom 45). The government also promised to directly engage indigenous groups to define the legal elements of special semiautonomous reservations called comarcas (Jordan-Ramos 168).

Despite the superficially favorable appearance of multiculturalism policies on the self-determination of indigenous peoples, more thorough analysis reveals a menacing character (see Hale). Multiculturalism policies can in effect limit the greater empowerment of indigenous people by only granting largely symbolic political participation roles (Horton 834). In cases across Latin America, indigenous land recognition by the governments has also been used as an excuse for governmental neglect, furthering the marginalization of indigenous peoples (835). Additionally, there are some scholars who warn of a connection between multiculturalism policies and the advancement of neoliberal ideologies (849). They argue that these policies

impose values of individualism, consumption, resource use, competition, and capitalism onto indigenous groups. These neoliberal values threaten the traditional collective organizational systems and sustainable resource management of these groups.

### *Ngöbe Adaptive Responses*

External and internal push and pull factors as well as the neoliberal aspects of multiculturalism have forced the Ngöbe to adapt in creative and novel ways. Policies created under the Torrijos regime gave limited protection to Ngöbe land, but the aggressive agenda of Torrijos also set the country on a path of vastly increased resource consumption (Jordan-Ramos 181). As the government discovered more and more the resource richness of the lands occupied by Ngöbe people, the pressure to access those resources mounted. The government began offering land recognition to indigenous groups in return for hydroelectric and mining project approval (182). These types of projects represent a radical change in the threat to land rights for the Ngöbe from the previous gradual encroachment to drastic large-scale resource exploitation projects (Young and Bort 1985, 7). To counter these new threats, Ngöbe have had to adapt, organize, mobilize, and unite to find more effective ways to defend their local ecology and autonomy (Wickstrom 56). Young and Bort describe the situation like a hermit crab coming out of the mountains; the Ngöbe could no longer remain isolated in their homes, they had to come out to directly interact with the outside world in order to secure and defend their way of life (Young and Bort 1985, 7). At times, this engagement brought Ngöbe people well beyond their traditional culture into the realm of politics, education, and westernized thought (Wickstrom 57).

One of the first structural adaptations was the creation of caciques, or regional chiefs, within the comarca (Jordan-Ramos 173). The caciques were created to more effectively

communicate the interests of the Ngöbe people with the government; however early caciques had limited success in navigating the western world and communicating their messages in Spanish (174). This led to a demand for Western-educated, younger generations who eventually found their way into authoritative positions (175). One of these authoritative positions exploited by the newly educated youth was the Ngöbe-Buglé General Congress, created in 1979 (175). The general congress can also be considered another social capital adaptation used by Ngöbe to secure lands rights as it became a primary communication medium with the government. Participation in politics by Ngöbe people began increasing during this time as well (Young and Bort 1985, 8). At the beginning, new political leaders were largely ineffective at garnering unified support that represented an accomplished force in the political field (Young and Bort 1979). Yet, through experience, training, education, and support from outside organizations, the Ngöbe became better at extorting benefit from the political system (Wickstrom 56).

The Ngöbe ultimately achieved formalized land recognition in the Law 10 signed on March 7, 1997 (Jordan-Ramos 190). Law 10 establishes the Ngöbe-Buglé Comarca and defines how it is to be governed. Although a long-fought achievement, the law still did not grant outright ownership of all resources within the comarca and only included about half of the original land petitioned by the Ngöbe (Wickstrom 58). The law only grants usufructory rights to the natural resources of the Comarca, meaning the government still had legal rights to exploit all its natural resources (Jordan-Ramos 191), thus keeping the door open for the government to develop those resources if it is “in the best economic interest of the country” (Young 2007, 22). Thus, the hydroelectric and mining projects first proposed during the Torrijos years, mainly the Cerro Colorado mine and the Tabasará and Teribe-Changuinola hydroelectric projects, were salvaged, setting the stage for a continuation of the already prolonged land rights struggle.



## **Justification**

There is an informational gap to the overall influence that cultural hybridization is having on indigenous peoples' struggle for self-determination. This lack of knowledge exists even as the issue becomes more and more pressing as more countries move into a transitional developing economy status. Remaining cultural diversity is under threat now more than ever under the pressures of a globalizing world, invoking a profound human rights issue. In the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the diversity of cultures is recognized as the "common heritage of humankind" and Article 3 states that, "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination." This document is testimony to the international recognition of cultural diversity and its right to thrive. Yet the processes which threaten cultural diversity across the globe continue today. However, threats to cultural diversity today have taken on a different appearance than the blood stained direct measures of the past. Threats are less conspicuous. Land rights and cultures are being exploited not with guns and bullets but with pen and paper. The indigenous response to this neoliberal attack has also changed, but understanding this new battle field is still lacking. Protecting the remaining cultural diversity means starting with a simple understanding of how those cultures are being lost and what factors are playing into the survival and disappearance of cultures. The importance of this question may be furthermore compounded when considering correlations of cultural diversity with other factors such as world biodiversity. Threats to biodiversity is a topic of its own, but there are many who now consider a link exists between these two world diversities (Toledo 3, Mulder and Coppolillo). It remains to be seen if one is separable from the other, but the importance of cultural diversity for the sake of human rights is reason enough for concern.

In the case of the Ngöbe, adaptive responses to the changing social and political context have resulted in increased interaction between the Ngöbe and western society. An increased rate of cultural hybridization is an expected consequence of this increased interaction. Part of this cultural hybridization has occurred in the search for better capability to achieve self-determination, but nonetheless raises questions about the cultural survival of the Ngöbe people. This study aims to answer the question of how cultural hybridization among the Ngöbe affects their ability to achieve self-determination. Research on this question focused on the recent events of the hydroelectric and mining conflict between the Panamanian State and Ngöbe peoples as a case study.

### **Background on Recent Events**

Relations between the Panamanian State and Ngöbe people in the year 2012 have reached a point of unprecedented conflict in recent times. Stress led to a boiling point of violent confrontation in the early part of the year. The events leading to this point start with protests in 2009 and 2010 as part of an ongoing battle on mining and hydroelectric projects in the Ngöbe-Buglé Comarca. These earlier protests resulted in negotiations and an article, Article 5, of the national mining law of 415 which cancelled all foreign investment and mining concessions inside the Comarca. However, late in 2011, Article 5 was pulled out of the law without consulting the Ngöbe people during the ongoing debate in Panama's Congress, once again establishing the concessions within the Comarca. This unequivocal retraction from earlier agreements prompted the Ngöbe to organize a wide-scale protest. On January 31, 2012, Ngöbe took to the streets and shut down all lanes of the Pan-American Highway near San Félix in the providence of Chiriquí, Panama. The Panamanian government responded with riot police.

Confrontations between the Ngöbe protestors and police over the next eight days resulted in two deaths, over 40 injuries, and at least 100 arrests.

On February 7, the road blocks came to an end with the San Lorenzo Accord signed by officials of the government and the Cacica General, Silvia Carrera representing the Ngöbe people. In this accord, protests were ceased with the conditions of freed arrested protesters, ending judicial prosecution of protesters, and complete withdrawal of riot police. It also set up the stage for the dialogue between the government and Ngöbe to follow. Dialogue began on February 10, in the National Assembly. The government held the position that they could not revoke on concessions already signed because they had to honor the legal security of international businesses, whereas the position of the Cacica and others at the table was that the Comarca was not consulted for those concessions and the concessions were in direct contradiction to agreements already signed with the Comarca. After more than six weeks of talks, a special law for the protection of mineral, water, and environmental resources of the Ngöbe-Buglé Comarca was created in Law 11 signed on March 27, 2012.

The law contains 17 articles which refers to both mining and hydroelectric projects. In articles 3 and 4, it prohibits the granting of mining concessions within the Comarca, annexed areas, and adjacent Ngöbe-Buglé communities and cancels all existing concessions within the Comarca and annex areas. Article 6 establishes the consultation process for all future hydroelectric projects completely within or partially within the comarca and annexed areas. All future concession will be subject to the consultation and approval of general, regional, and local congress as well as referendums at the comarcial, regional, or local levels. All future hydroelectric projects will also include specified economic benefits for the Comarca and annexed areas including 5% royalty of the annual billing and 25% of the the employees to develop the

project. The law also establishes the process for economic compensation for displaced inhabitants of future projects in Article 9.

Despite this comprehensive law, the dialogue at the table has not stopped. There are certain very contentious hydroelectric concessions still under dialogue because Law 11 only refers to future project developments. Included in this list is the Barro Blanco hydroelectric project on the Tabasará River which remains the most controversial of projects. Controversy almost led to the complete cancellation of talks in the month of March when government officials threatened to leave the dialogue table after Ngöbe leaders petitioned the cancellation of Barro Blanco. Arguments in the Assembly made their way out of the building and led to shots being fired into a group of protesters in the Park of the National Assembly. This confrontation ultimately led to the talks moving from the National Assembly building to the United Nations building in Clayton. Along with the move, the two sides of the table came to a temporary agreement regarding these most controversial projects signed on the 15th of March. In this agreement, the government promised to temporarily suspend constructions on the Barro Blanco dam in order to complete a field verification of the Environmental Impact Statement (Acuerdo). A field verification would include stakeholder meetings, identifying the uses and users of the river directly affected, a description of the socioeconomic activities and expected impacts of the project on those activities, and identification of cultural and historical richness such as petroglyphs (Propuesta para la Verificación del Campo). To this day, the field verification has not been completed and construction on the dam continues.

## **Methods**

This study used a combination of semistructured interviewing and participant observation as the main methods of investigation. Semistructured interviews have predetermined questions that guide the interviewer in the interview process, however the interview is not bound to only these questions; based on where the interview leads, the interviewer can adapt to form other questions as needed (Bernard 209-210). Interviews were given to two respondent groups; community members within the Comarca and university students living outside of the Comarca. Students consisted of Ngöbe students studying at the University of Panama in Panama City. Community members were from communities within the District of Muno in the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé and from the community of Quebrada Kia, Bakama, Annex Area of the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé. Interviews lasted from fifteen to thirty minutes depending on the respondent. Note taking was the only technique used to transcribe the information during the interview process.

About ten respondents were interviewed for each group. Due to the short amount of time in the field, participants were solicited by the snowball sampling technique where individuals were selected based on information and recommendations from previous interview respondents (see Biernacki and Waldorf). Field time was divided into two blocks. The first of about one week was spent at the University of Panama in Panama City. Both interviews and participant observation was conducted within the Association of Ngöbe-Buglé University Students. The second field block of about ten days was spent living with two families in communities of Las Trancas, District of Muno, Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé and Quebrada Kia, District of Bakama, Annexed Area of the Comarca Ngöbe-Buglé. Participant observation was a key tool used in the second block of field work. Beyond the everyday conversational observations, participant observation also included attending community meetings.

The interviews for both respondent groups were tailored according to the respondent group in question, each interview guide having slightly different questions, but with key questions the same (see appendix A). There are two principle variables in this study: cultural hybridization and ability to achieve self-determination. Each variable was broken into sub-variables.

Cultural hybridization was broken into three sub-variables: education, emigration rate, and cultural change. Education in this context is the amount of education that respondents have received or plan to receive in their life. The emigration rate will be a qualitative assessment based on the perceptions of respondents and the amount of people leaving their community. Cultural changes will also be a qualitative assessment based on questions in the interview about how the Ngöbe culture has changed and how the students perceive they have changed. These sub-variables will be used as indicators of the overall cultural hybridization existing in the community.

The ability to achieve self-determination encompasses three sub-variables: involvement in the conflict, ability to affect outcome of conflict, and the amount of unity existing between and within respondent groups. Involvement in the conflict is based on the perceived and observed roles that respondents and others have played in confronting the conflict. This variable is an important indicator to the extent at which the respondent groups are involved in promoting the self-determination of their people. The respondents' ability to influence the outcome was assessed based on the level of involvement and actions taken in the conflict. This is an important variable in assessing the effectiveness of each respondent group's ability to achieve self-determination. The amount of unity existing between and within respondent groups was qualitatively assessed through comparing the student and community member perceptions of

how to address this conflict. This variable is based on a unified message and effort as being a necessary component of a self determined people. Both the potential and realized benefits of student education to their communities as well as the compared differences between what the community sees as acceptable outcomes and what the students see as acceptable outcomes were used to evaluate respondent unity.

Data analysis of interview information was conducted qualitatively and categorically. Notes taken for each interview were analyzed for categories based on the respondent answers, looking for trends of repetition within categories. If each respondent gave only one answer and each answer was different, there would be a corresponding number of categories with frequencies of one divided by the number of respondents. If every respondent gave the same answer, there would be just one category with a frequency of 100 percent. Each respondent group, student and community, was analyzed separately, to allow the comparison of categories generated between groups and frequency patterns within those categories. Information directly quoted from interviews is cited using a code system of date(mm/dd/yy)RespondentGroup(S-student and CM-community member)interview#(1-10). Information gathered by participant observation was used to compliment the information analyzed from the interviews in the discussion section.

## **Results**

### *Student Respondent Group*

A total of nine students were interviewed. They were all students contacted through the Association of Ngöbe-Buglé University Students of the University of Panama. They averaged in the third year of study with a range of seven different study subjects (engineering, mathematics,

computer science, architecture, humanities, Spanish, and political law). There were two mathematic students and two Spanish students. Influences that the students felt for coming to the city to study were varied but certain themes were apparent. Most felt a lack of opportunity to quality education in their Comarca. Coming to the city was an option that opened the door to both educational and economic activities for those that aspired to learn. This desire to learn was both personal and communal for some students. Problems existing in their communities and in the Comarca in general, inspired students to seek a education to help address these problems. One student was specifically motivated by the poverty that exists in the Comarca (4/18/12S6).

Six out of the nine considered that they individually had changed since leaving the community in ways such as gaining new perspectives, losing particular parts of the traditional culture, and modernization. They recognized that living outside of the traditional way of life has impacted their personal habits and customs. While in the city they no longer have the community contact or the opportunity to “live in the traditional sense” like is done in the communities of the Comarca (4/16/12S3). Yet, they felt pride in being Ngöbe and most mentioned a conscious effort to maintain parts of their culture. The components of culture they mentioned that they maintain practicing in the city included the language, religion, and dance. Of those, language and dance were mentioned the most, five and four times respectively.

All students considered that there have been cultural changes within the Ngöbe culture in general since the generation of their grandparents. As one student said, the coexistence of the Ngöbe culture with other cultures of Panama has resulted in an exchange where “one culture gives something and the other culture gives something else” (4/17/12S5). Two other students spoke in a similar matter about this mixing of cultures. In other interviews, students focused on the loss of culture instead of a mixing, speaking of the preservation of traditional culture.



Modernization, education, and wardrobe changes constituted the other forms of change perceived by these students. Of these, mixing cultures and forgetting cultural customs were mentioned the most, with frequencies (number of occurrences divided by the total number of categories) of 0.56 and 0.33 respectively. Seven of the students mentioned that family members had also emigrated from the community to another place to work or study. Locations included Changuinola, Cerro Punta, David, and Panama City. The majority of this emigration seemed to be in search of work.

Nearly all students were involved in the recent protest and demonstrations, whether by just supportive or direct action means. Motivations to be involved stated by the students varied widely. Two students mentioned defending the rights of the Ngöbe people, two mentioned a responsibility or obligation to be involved, and two mentioned motivation for the protection of the environment. There were also other reasons based in ethnic pride such as the preservation of the Ngöbe race, family, and as one student put it, “I was born a fighter ..... We have to fight for our future and our people” (4/19/12S9). Family involvement in the protests was high as well. Nearly all stated that their family was involved, three even had family members directly involved in dialogue and leadership roles. In the perspective of the students, they believe that they can help the Ngöbe achieve self-determination by protesting, educating, orienting, supporting, organizing, and bringing the message to a broader audience. General support of the Ngöbe’s struggle for rights was the most common mentioned of these.

All students had plans to return to their communities after finishing their studies in the city. It was clear that the students carry a strong desire to use their education as a tool to help them support their communities in the future. Some even had concrete plans of how they were going to support their community. Several want to return as professors to create a “better

quality of life for children” (4/16/12S3). Another has plans to create a foundation to aid the poor people of Ngöbe communities (4/18/12S6). And yet another wants to become the cacique to help defend the rights and interests of the Ngöbe people (4/19/12S9). In general students expressed a desire to help achieve a better future for the Comarca and Ngöbe people. In this future, four students envisioned a future with a better education system in the Comarca, three envisioned the Ngöbe people continuing the struggle for the realization of their interests and rights, and two had a vision of a respected comarca in the future. The most common response to what the Ngöbe people need to reach this future was more and better education. Two students also mentioned the necessity of a unified people. Additionally, students stated orientation, maintaining active, stricter regulations in the Comarca, a comprehensive development strategy, support from other organizations, and organization as other methods necessary to advance the Ngöbe people.

In conflicts such as the recent and ongoing, six of the students stated that demanding for the respect of the Ngöbe people is the best way to invoke their rights and interests, whereas three students mentioned dialogue as the most effective technique. Protesting, education, and support from other organizations were also perceived as valuable to this cause. A majority of two-thirds of the students did not find the agreement signed with the government in the Law 11 to be satisfactory. They indicated that the law still opens space for the government to exploit the resources and people of the Comarca. Two students would only agree with a law that grants the condition-less prohibition of any hydroelectric or mining project in the Comarca, believing that this was the only thing that the Ngöbe were fighting for. Those that agreed with the law, three of the nine, thought that the law completed the majority of what the people asked for.

Opinions on whether the Ngöbe had improved the way that they fight for their self-determination were split, five saying yes and four stating no. Those that felt an improvement

pointed to recent agreements with the government as positive developments. Their protests have gained better recognition of the laws which protect them and invoke a government that is more responsive to the interests and rights of the Ngöbe (4/16/12S4). Recent dialogue with the government has also set the precedence for future conflict resolution with the government (4/17/12S5). One student felt that at one time there used to be greater respect for the indigenous pueblos, but governments have changed and now promote “projects” which treat the indigenous people like objects. This change in political environment induced the Ngöbe people to change how they fight for their land and in recent governments, there has been some progress in reaching agreements (4/19/12S9). Students who felt that there has been no improvement, believe that the way Ngöbe defend their interests and rights lacks in several ways. It does not generate enough interest from the government and other organizations (4/18/12S7), there is not enough of a unified effort around a single cause (4/14/12S1), and there has not been enough progress in keeping the government from trying to manipulate the resources of the Comarca (4/16/12S3).

### *Community Respondent Group*

A total of eight community members were interviewed, however the community atmosphere permitted the opportunity for participant observation much more than the time spent in the city. Much of the situational analysis was gained through participant observation of community meetings, both outside the theme of this study and directly formed in the purpose of this study. Results in this section will be displayed for the interview information only; the participant observation results will be considered in the discussion and conclusion to follow.

Only three of the interviewed respondents had left the community to study beyond secondary education; two to become teachers and the third studied in publicity. Surprisingly, two

of these three studied out of the country, in Costa Rica and Chile. A minority of one-fourth felt that they had changed culturally over their lifespan, caused by the exposure to other cultures. One member felt especially pained to admit these changes (5/1/12CM7). The majority however, felt they had not changed and still practice their culture. These community members especially emphasized the traditional lifestyle of working, treating others, and family interaction. Half of the respondents believed the Ngöbe language to be a large component of their traditional culture. Others mentioned religion, wardrobe, dance, and artisanal customs. Despite this individual tie to culture, most felt that there have been notable changes in Ngöbe culture in general. The most common noted changes were in cultural mixing and the disappearance of cultural practices.

All respondents were involved in the conflict in varying degrees, including directly on the dialogue table with the government, elected community organizers, community activists, and concerned community members. All respondents expressed great concern when asked about the development of hydroelectric and mining projects within the Comarca. In fact, there was only one respondent who voiced an opinion which would accept a project in the Comarca, saying that, “I would accept a project that was thoroughly consulted with the people” (4/26/12CM3). Two community members felt a strong betrayal from the government, using words such as “tricked, traded, and forgotten” (4/26/12CM4) and “according to the government, I am nothing” (4/26/12CM5). Others were concerned for the impacts these projects have on the people and resources of the Comarca, and others thought that there are better ways to develop the Comarca without the problems associated with these projects.

Community respondents stated a wide variety of best methods to invoke the interests and rights of the Ngöbe people, including eight different categories. The most frequent was protesting followed by dialogue; however, believing in one does not mean skepticism in the

other. Some believe that while dialogue is the best option, but “dialogue has never accomplished anything for the Ngöbe” because the government does not listen, so protest and closing highways is the only option left (4/18/12CM1). Education, fighting for consultation, and fighting for respect had equal frequencies of just 0.25. The other categories of fighting for projects with benefits to the community, organization, and seeking support of external organizations were only mentioned once. Agreement over the Law 11 signed with the government was roughly split although some respondents did not know enough about the agreement to answer the question. Reasons for dissatisfaction were that it still does not recognize the collective right of the Ngöbe people and that community leaders did not consult with the “pueblo”, or the community members, before coming to the agreement.

The vision for the future of the Ngöbe people in Panama also varied significantly. Only two categories had more than one incidence among the interviews. Three respondents envision a future where the Ngöbe people continue to fight for the protection of the culture and resource richness of the Comarca. Two respondents have dreams of a Comarca which returns to the traditional culture of the Ngöbe people. In the words of one respondent, “Ngöbe is not a pueblo, it is a nation. I hope that one day we can return to being a nation again” (4/18/12CM1). Traditional culture is also the most frequent answer among the categories of what the Ngöbe people need to reach a better future. Within traditional culture, at least one respondent found language to be particularly important stating that language is the basis for all traditional culture (5/1/12CM7). Unity, respect, an understanding government, and dialogue were mentioned in two occurrences as ways to reach a better future. Government support, organization, education, and orientation had occurrences of one.

Community member opinions on whether the Ngöbe had improved the way that they fight for their self-determination were mostly positive. A majority believed that at least in some way, it has improved. They have been able to accomplish agreements with the government, they have increased the communication with the government, and they are better prepared and trained. One member even mentioned education as a positive technique that has helped prepare the Ngöbe people (4/29/12CM6). However, as other respondents stated, the fight is not over and what little improvements there have been are ultimately not enough (4/19/12CM2), and the Ngöbe still have not achieved the complete respect they demand (4/26/12CM5).

## **Discussion**

Results from this study are limited in scope and scale. Thus, findings here provide a glimpse of the Ngöbe perspective, however, more research is needed to broaden this perspective to the entire Ngöbe population. In terms of cultural hybridization, it is clear from both the review of literature and the results of this study that it is a very real phenomenon affecting the Ngöbe people. Results from this study specifically indicate that university students have a self-acknowledged recognition of cultural change. They are conscious that leaving the community has brought upon certain changes in their culture. They have lost some traditional customs, have modernized, and have gained new customs amidst the constant interaction they have had with a different culture. Keeping in mind the limits of this case study, members of the communities investigated on the other hand, do not manifest self-acknowledged cultural change. They were more likely to profess that they have maintained their cultural traditions despite pressures from other cultures surrounding and even penetrating their everyday lives. On a general level, both groups admit that the Ngöbe culture has changed quite significantly. Here, the cultural

hybridization reveals itself in a perception of the Ngöbe people themselves. Both the loss of certain traditional customs and the mixing of culture ideas with those which the Ngöbe interact are indicators of cultural hybridization. One of the factors influencing this hybridization is the emigration of Ngöbe people into areas dominated by non-Ngöbe cultures. It is evident from both student and community member respondent groups that the emigration factor is pronounced. The majority of emigration is driven by the search for work and economic supplement. This in itself can be considered an abandonment of traditional livelihood practices for modern market-based economy alternatives, albeit often not by choice.

The results of this study demonstrate interesting insights to the struggle for self-determination as told by these two respondent groups. Students appeared to be involved mostly in the protesting element of the conflict, whereas the community members surveyed and those family members mentioned by the students, had more diverse roles such as community leaders and members at the dialogue table. Students' desires to return to their community after completing their studies suggests that despite living away, a strong connection with their community has not been lost. This implies an increased ability to affect outcomes in future conflicts. Students who bring the skills they develop in academic institutions back to support and develop their communities will build relationships well suited to cooperate in future struggles. In comparison to community responses, students showed greater within-group unity. Themes of education for improved Ngöbe self-determination were manifested within the interviews and were strongly supported by many of the students. Additionally, demanding for the respect of the Ngöbe rights also showed strong support within the student respondents as the best way to invoke their interests and rights in the future.

Results from community interviews did not show strong within group unity. Responses were varied and infrequently overlapped. This observation is consistent with the research literature and participant observation of a diversified populace. This topic will be discussed more in the following section. One theme that showed some congruence was that of returning to traditional culture as a means of future success of the Ngöbe people. This theme is one that is absent in the student interviews, drawing a sharp distinction between groups. Other distinctions can be made in the perception of how the Ngöbe people are being represented. Several community members voiced concerns of misrepresentation not only by the government of the state but also by their own people. This includes elected authority leaders but also educated Ngöbe that are in positions to interact with the state. There is a certain amount of mistrust that exists of people who are no longer living the conditions of the everyday members of the pueblo. This topic will be discussed further in the following section as well.

One of the most perceivable commonalities between groups was a strong commitment to the continuation of the struggle towards self-determination of the Ngöbe people. This commitment was very evident in both groups. They agree that the fight is not over, there is still more to be achieved, and that they will not give up, until satisfied with the level of respect government and interest groups grant them. There was also some agreement between the groups that the Ngöbe had improved the way that they fight for their self-determination. The recently achieved agreements with the government signify progress for the Ngöbe. Their struggle for self-determination is improving, but there is still a long way to go before reaching the level of respect that the Ngöbe people demand.

For the conclusion section to follow, it is also important to form a picture of the situational analysis conducted by the participatory observation. One of the most striking



observations from the communities relates to the authoritative structure of the current Ngöbe governance. A full analysis of this governance structure is beyond the objectives of this study, yet the topic cannot be avoided in order to understand the realities of the situation. Years of constant land rights and human rights struggles have resulted in a governance structure that is quite complicated. As mentioned in the background sections, evolving threats to land security prompted subsequent social capital adaptations by the Ngöbe. These new adaptations added to the old governance structures without completely replacing the old systems. This multi-bodied governance structure in combination with the acephalous character originating from dispersion of the early colonial times represents a clear limitation to the unity of the Ngöbe people. Among the communities visited in this study, there existed a very palpable mistrust of different authoritative bodies. They felt misrepresented by some, loyal to others, and indifferent to the rest. Many community members accused leaders of different authoritative bodies of seeking personal benefits over the benefit of the people they were supposed to be representing. The situation is even more complex, when different governing bodies interact with the Panamanian State in different ways. The state does not recognize the authority of all bodies, but may negotiate or interact with different members of any one of the bodies. Overall, the situation leads to a very divided populace which is not conducive to unified action.

Another reality of the governance structure observed was its self promotion of misrepresentation. As one member of the community lamented, the fault of authority members misrepresenting the people they represent often lies on the constituents for not informing themselves on the actions of their representatives. However, with different governing bodies acting at different scales, discussing different topics, with different levels of state recognition, and different community roles, following the actions of each representative can be difficult.

There isn't an effective method established in the communities to inform constituents on activities of the governing bodies. Thus, the door remains open for representatives to act on behalf of personal benefit whilst the community remains uninformed of their actions.

Education within the Comarca is another topic that is important in the situational analysis at the community level. Most towns within the Comarca have public schools, run by the state. Teachers often come from outside of the Comarca. Very few of the teachers observed in this study were Ngöbe members of the community. At the schools, Spanish and English are taught as well as other fundamental subjects such as mathematics and science. Observation in this study found a great concern within the community regarding these schools. Community members expressed agitation that these schools were directly competing with the traditional cultural teachings of the Ngöbe culture. Here students were learning the Latino language, Latino history, and Latino culture instead of the Ngöbe language, stories, and culture. In the minds of many, these schools were perceived as open sores in the Comarca, allowing the entrance of other cultures, infecting the minds of the children. They are swaying the minds of the young people, making them more prone to the ideas of the westernized world. One member sees this westernizing of young Ngöbe as a threat to the Ngöbe way of life as people become more open to the westernized idea of dependency on the western system. At the extreme end, another community member said that the schools are destroying the Ngöbe culture. Even a student in the interviews expressed concern that the existing education system in the Comarca is not aligned with the Ngöbe way of life and needs to be changed (4/19/12S9).

## **Conclusions**

In order to determine the affect of cultural hybridization on the Ngöbe's ability to achieve self-determination, both the potential benefits and costs of cultural hybridization to self-determination must be examined. Drawing on the information gained solely from the interviews, conclusions in relation to the research question only partially form. In the perspective of the students, they feel that their education will bring substantial benefits back to their communities. They recognize that these benefits come at a cost to their cultural character, but do not see that as a limitation to the benefits that they will be able to offer their communities.

At the community level, the picture does not become clear without information from participatory observation. Based on the problems facing the unity of the Ngöbe, there is ample potential for Western education to facilitate a more unified effort towards self-determination. There are two principle limitations existing at the community level; accurate current information following to the community and an organizational framework to pass this information and make unified decisions. As an example, one community member mentioned that in every conflict, students are always first to react because they are organized and informed. Whereas the community does not act with the same force because it is poorly informed and not organized. Students mentioned in interviews that organization and orientation were some of the benefits they thought they could bring to their communities. An informed populace is essential to the decision making ability of the people. This topic was discussed briefly in relation to the authoritative figures, but information on the actions of the Panamanian State and other interest groups interacting with the Ngöbe is just as important. If the populace is not informed, the government or interest groups can promote projects without a balanced perspective. Information following into the community can come from any informed individual, but those having been exposed to western thought and capitalist functions may be in a better position to fully

understand and communicate this information. Here, cultural hybridization can again play the role of transition from one culture to the next, transferring and translating information in an understandable form.

Yet just as important as the individuals who pass on information, is an organizational framework that can reproduce the information and lead to unified decision making within the community. This development of social capital can happen without the advent of cultural hybridization, but organizational structures designed to be responsive to capitalistic threats will be most effective. This means having a good understanding of how the organizational structure of the capitalist system works. In this case, cultural hybridization can help inform the Ngöbe people on how to structure themselves in order to best face the organizational structures which threaten their interests and rights. Some of the current governance structures existing in the Ngöbe are the result of attempts to increase responsiveness in this way, but organization within them still lacks.

Cultural hybridization can also increase the effective interaction ability between the Ngöbe people and the Panamanian State. At the fundamental level, a good understanding of the Spanish language helps avoid miscommunication and exploitation. There is a lot of technical language in the agreements, laws, concessions, and documents of state governments and interest groups. People who are not well practiced in the Spanish language are thus at a disadvantage when working with these types of documents. The role that cultural hybridization can play here is clear; exposure and experience with this type of technical language used by governments and other interest groups can help the Ngöbe people avoid exploitation without their explicit understanding.

While cultural hybridization may provide avenues for a more active, organized, and informed people, there are serious cautions associated with cultural hybridization as well. By definition, cultural hybridization leads to the loss of certain cultural aspects. These losses can be small or large depending on the case. There may be a threshold that exists which when crossed has more detrimental cost to the cultural survival than beneficial gain in capacitation. Views in the community that exist about this topic are varied. There are those who believe that one can leave the community, learn another language, study, and return without losing the fundamental part of culture to secure its survival. However, others fear that people who leave the community to interact within another culture will ultimately lose their connection with realities of the pueblo. They will forget what it is like to live in the pueblo and become separated from their roots. It is obviously a very thin line which is beyond the limits of this study to explore further.

Education as a component of cultural hybridization is another delicate topic. Community members see Western education in the Comarca as a direct and immediate threat to their cultural survival. If education beyond the secondary level was to be a beneficial tool for the Ngöbe's struggle for self-determination without threatening their overall cultural survival, education at primary and secondary level would have to allow traditional culture to be maintained. If that is not currently the case, that is very disconcerting for the cultural survival into the future.

Probably the most threatening pitfall of cultural hybridization on the cultural survival of the Ngöbe people is the introduction of capitalistic values into the traditional societal framework of the Ngöbe. Ngöbe society, resource management, human rights, and land rights are based on communal ownership and use. Part of the Ngöbe's success in defending their territory depends on this communal character. It is much more difficult to unify a people into collective action without collective ownership of something. This is clearly seen in the example of the Barro

Colorado hydroelectric project which affects large populations of both indigenous Ngöbe people and Latino campesinos. However, the Ngöbe people have always been the more active, more vocal of the groups because they have a common vested interest in their Comarca.

The values of the capitalist system, individualism, consumption, resource use, and competition directly conflict with the values which form the base of a communal system. As history tells repetitively with other indigenous groups around the world, the more capitalism penetrates the communal society of indigenous groups, the faster the resources get exploited, land rights are sold, territory is lost, and traditional cultures deteriorate. As a consequence, so decays the self-determination of the people as well. Capitalism promotes not the self-determination of a people but rather the self-determination of an individual; personal benefit over communal benefit. For this reason, community members are rightly worried about the loyalty of their representatives. A person granted a position of power with capitalistic values can make decisions based on personal benefit which undermine the self-determination desires of the populace. Cultural hybridization can only facilitate self-determination without threatening cultural survival if it maintains the communal character of the traditional culture and does not simultaneously promote capitalistic values. This capitalism precautionary rule is the greatest limitation facing the ability of cultural hybridization to aid in the self-determination of the Ngöbe.

By the review of information gained by interviews complimented by a situational analysis from participatory observation this study finds that cultural hybridization can function as an effective tool in the Ngöbe's struggle for self-determination, with certain important requisites. Cultural hybridization can help effectively inform the Ngöbe community of the threats they face and options they can take in order to address those threats. Cultural hybridization can lead to the

facilitation of an organizational framework within the community that efficiently communicates information, results in unified decision making, and is well suited to compete against organizational structures of the state and other interest groups. Cultural hybridization can also help avoid the exploitation of resources based on language barriers and miscommunication. However, there are important conditions that must be considered before deeming cultural hybridization as an effective tool. Cultural hybridization leads to the loss of culture and can sever the connections communities feel with people who have left. Western education in the Comarca is considered to be directly competing with and replacing traditional cultural learning, leading to the deterioration of cultural survival. The interaction of cultural hybridization with the capitalist system also brings the danger of introducing capitalist values into the communal system of the indigenous society which like an infection, can simultaneously subvert a unified call for self-determination and disintegrate their culture. While the Ngöbe may find better means to secure their land rights, seek respect of their human rights, and maintain their cultural roots through cultural hybridization, that integration with the capitalistic society may undermine their communal resource management and ultimately their cultural survival into the future. This finding however is based on the case study analysis of just a small group of students and communities in just one area of a large diverse comarca. It is thus not the intention of this study to claim this statement can be generalized across the Comarca or even into other indigenous populations. Nonetheless, there are important messages coming from this study that can be used to inform situations at a broader scale.

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## Appendix A. Respondent Group Survey Guides

### *Student Respondent Group*

Primero, me gustaría agradecerle por su tiempo en el día de hoy. Esta entrevista se dividirá en tres partes. La primera será preguntas sencillas sobre Usted mismo (a), la segunda sobre sus creencias y tradiciones, y la última sobre el reciente conflicto con relación a proyectos hidroeléctricos y mineros.

1. ¿A dónde vive usted en la actualidad? ¿Porqué está viviendo allí? ¿Trabajo? ¿Estudio? ¿Qué estudia?
2. ¿A dónde vivía usted antes? ¿A dónde vive su familia? ¿Otros miembros de su familia han dejado la comunidad para estudiar o trabajar como usted?
3. ¿Que influyó en su decisión a dejar la comunidad y vivir a donde usted vive actualmente? ¿Tiene planes de regresar a vivir en la comunidad en el futuro?
4. ¿Qué beneficios espera usted de estudiar o trabajar en donde vive en la actualidad? ¿Para usted? ¿Para su comunidad?
5. ¿Cuál usted considera su identificación étnica: afrodescendiente, mestizo o indígena: Naso, Guna, Embera, Wounaan, Bri-bri, Ngöbe, o Buglé?

Ahora vamos a hablar un poco sobre sus creencias y tradiciones

1. ¿Aprendió de sus padres algunas creencias y costumbres tradicionales del pueblo Ngöbe (Bugle)?
2. ¿Todavía practica usted algunas de estas creencias y tradiciones en la Ciudad?
3. ¿Siente usted en términos generales que la cultura Ngöbe ha cambiado entre la generación de sus abuelos y la suya?
4. A nivel personal, ¿siente usted que ha cambiado en este sentido desde que salió la comunidad?

Ahora le quiero preguntar sobre el reciente conflicto

1. ¿Usted se involucró de alguna manera en las movilizaciones? ¿De qué manera?
2. ¿Cómo piensa usted que puede ayudar a la lucha del pueblo Ngöbe? ¿Que lo motiva a querer involucrarse?
3. ¿Los miembros de su familia se involucraron de alguna manera? ¿De qué manera?
4. En su opinión, ¿cuál es la mejor manera de hacer valer los intereses y los derechos del pueblo Ngöbe? ¿Considera Usted que hoy en día ha mejorado la manera en que los Ngöbe hacen valer sus intereses y sus derechos?
5. ¿Qué piensa sobre el acuerdo hecho alcanzado con la Ley 11 de 2012 para resolver el conflicto minero e hidroeléctrico? ¿Cuál piensa usted que hubiera sido el resultado ideal?
6. ¿Cuál es su visión del futuro del pueblo Ngöbe en Panama? ¿Qué piensa Usted que necesita hacer el pueblo para alcanzarlo?

*Community Respondent Group*

Primero, me gustaría agradecerle por su tiempo en el día de hoy. Esta entrevista se dividirá en dos partes. La primera consistirá preguntas sencillas sobre Usted mismo (a), sus creencias y tradiciones, y la otra sobre el reciente conflicto con relación a proyectos hidroeléctricos y mineros.

1. ¿Cuántos años usted ha vivido en esta comunidad?
2. ¿Tiene Usted hijos? ¿Cuántos? ¿A dónde viven?
3. ¿Ha dejado la comunidad para estudiar o trabajar durante alguna época de su vida?
4. ¿Aprendió de sus padres creencias y costumbres tradicionales del pueblo Ngöbe (Bugle)?
5. ¿Todavía practica usted algunas de estas creencias y tradiciones?
6. ¿Le enseñó usted a sus hijos algunas de estas creencias y tradiciones?
7. ¿Siente usted en términos generales que la cultura Ngöbe ha cambiado entre la generación de sus abuelos y la suya?
8. A nivel personal, ¿siente Usted que ha cambiado en el transcurso de su vida?

Ahora le quiero preguntar sobre el reciente conflicto

1. ¿Cómo se siente usted sobre el desarrollo de proyectos hidroeléctricos y mineros dentro la Comarca?
2. En su opinión, ¿cuál es la mejor manera de hacer valer los intereses y los derechos del pueblo Ngöbe? ¿Considera Usted que hoy en día ha mejorado la manera en que los Ngöbe hacen valer sus intereses y sus derechos?
3. ¿Qué piensa sobre el acuerdo alcanzado con la Ley 11 de 2012 para resolver el conflicto minero e hidroeléctrico? ¿Cuál piensa usted que hubiera sido el mejor resultado posible?
4. En su opinión, ¿qué se pudo hacer mejor para hacer valer lo intereses y los derechos del pueblo Ngöbe en este conflicto?
5. ¿Cuál es su visión sobre el futuro del pueblo Ngöbe en Panama? ¿Qué piensa Usted que necesita hacer el pueblo Ngöbe para alcanzar este futuro?